



United States Senate

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BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

December 21, 2004

The Honorable Susan M. Collins
Chairwoman

Committee on Homeland Security and Gov. Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman
Ranking Member

Committee on Homeland Security and Gov. Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Collins and Senator Lieberman:

Some two months ago, I asked that the Committee on Governmental Affairs investigate the payment of millions of dollars in disaster aid to residents of South Florida who had no significant damage from any of the four the hurricanes that hit the state this summer. I now invite you to join me in seeking an investigation by the Government Accountability Office into this and other more recently disclosed problems.

Since my first request, there have been reports that the squandering of disaster aid by FEMA may be widespread. My initial concern stemmed from published reports that Miami-Dade County residents received far more in disaster assistance than people who lived in parts of the state that took a direct hit from Hurricane Frances.

It's just been reported that FEMA also approved thousands of Frances claims in North Carolina counties, where the storm caused only minor problems. And it's been disclosed that FEMA last year gave residents of Mobile, Alabama almost \$30 million for flooding last year - though the area suffered little or no such damage.

As you know, Congress approved the \$8.5 billion in aid after multiple hurricanes hit Florida this year. Considering these recent reports of people collecting aid without having experienced a loss, I seek your assistance now in reviewing FEMA's payouts for all of the claims from Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne.

I strongly support the assistance Congress approved for the victims of these storms, as people desperately need this assistance to recover and rebuild. But, Congress still must demand accountability of the agency spending our taxpayers' money. It also is our responsibility to ensure such funds reach those hardest hit by the storms.

Therefore, I urge vigorous congressional oversight along with an investigation by the GAO. I look forward to working with you on this important issue, and thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Bill Nelson